DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 037 417 SP 003 712

AUTHOR Alutto, Joseph A.; Belasco, James A.
TITLE Decisional Participation Among Teaching Personnel and Perceptions of Administrative Influence.
PUB DATE Mar 70
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented for the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Minneapolis, March 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.95
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization, Administrator Role, *Decision Making, Elementary School Teachers, Power Structure, *Schools, Secondary School Teachers, *Teacher Administrator Relationship, Teacher Attitudes, *Teacher Participation

ABSTRACT

If previously discovered influence-participation relationships are applicable to cperating school systems it should mean that by allowing and fostering increased decisional participation by teaching personnel, administrative officials should discover an increase in their relative influence. A study explored two questions: Among teachers is there an identifiable relationship between extent of decisional participation and the perceived or preferred relative influence of administrative officials? Is any identifiable participation-influence relationship differentially distributed among the general teaching population? Relevant questionnaire data was solicited from teachers in two western New York school districts, one rural and one urban, with responses from 60 percent and 75 percent respectively. Variables included six demographic characteristics and commitment to school system. Findings resulting from correlational analyses: A negative relationship exists generally between the extent of decisional participation by teachers and the degree of perceived and preferred administrative influence. However, little relationship exists between those factors among unmarried male secondary teachers with 1-3 years service and low organizational commitment. Most consistent negative participation-influence relationships were found among married female elementary teachers with 4-10 years seniority and medium organizational commitment. (JS)

ED037417

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Decisional Participation Among Teaching Personnel and Perceptions of Administrative Influence

Joseph A. Alutto
Department of Organizations
State University of New York at Buffalo

James A. Belasco
Department of Organizations
State University of New York at Buffalo

Paper Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
Minneapolis, Minnesota
March, 1970

S1003712

INTRODUCTION

All formal organizations, whether schools, hospitals, governmental agencies of business firms, have as a primary system problem control over the activities of members.[1] Since formal organizations seek to achieve a specific subset of goals through the coordinated efforts of many system members, the ability to predict behaviors of individual role performers is often a determinant of organizational effectiveness or success. The issue of achieving predictibility in membership behavior is perhaps of greatest importance for schools and other organizations believed to be fulfilling "maintenance" requirements for society.[2] That is to say, control over the actions of role performers in systems performing maintenance functions for society is particularly crucial since the outputs of these systems will be relied on to achieve a degree of societal stability and perpetuity. In such organizations control over member role behavior is essential in order to ensure a continuous, relatively uniform output.

Interestingly, organizations often identified as fulfilling maintenance functions for society (i.e., schools and hospitals) also tend to employ large numbers of employees who have adopted "professional" behavioral and value orientations. As has been noted by Blau and Scott among others, the employment of professionals creates rather special organizational control problems.[3] For example, while system oriented, bureaucratically inclined role performers usually accept the formal or informal influence of hierarchial administrative superiors, professionally oriented

employees tend to place greater emphasis on peer group based evaluations; and designations of professional "peers" may actually cut across not only intra-organizational hierarchical levels but also the boundaries of many different formal systems. Thus, when dealing with professional employees formal organizations must rely on <u>both</u> peer group norms and administrative superior-subordinate distinctions rather than solely on hierarchical relationships in order to insure predictability in the role performances of professionals. In essence, when encountering professionals in formal organizations one often discovers that the relative influence of administrative superiors is somewhat reduced relative to the influence of a professional peer group; a series of relationships which may or may not parallel administrative superior-subordinate structures.

In studying influence phenomena among professionals and non-professionals employed in primarily industrial firms, Tannenbaum and others have posited rather distinct relationships between the extent of actual participation in organizational decision-making and the relative influence of administrative superiors.[4] These theorists argue that it is neither necessary nor often correct for superiors or subordinates to assume a "fixed pie" notion of influence; i.e., superiors and subordinates should assume neither that there exists some absolute pool or power or influence nor that the "sharing" of influence necessarily means a reduction in the influence of administrative superiors. On the contrary, the research of Tannenbaum and his colleagues suggests that superiors may actually increase their relative influence by allowing and

encouraging subordinates to take an active, meaningful part in organizational decision-making. Essentially, it is being suggested that by broadening the base of control over organizational decision-making administrative superiors are merely increasing the total amount of influence available to all system members, and, in effect, this increased decisional participation results in the attainment of greater predictability in the performance of appropriate role behaviors.

Purpose of the Research

If these previously discovered influence-participation relationships are applicable to operating school systems it should mean that by allowing and fostering increased decisional participation by teaching personnel administrative officials such as principals and superintendents should discover an increase in their relative influence. Therefore, in this research we attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Among teaching personnel is there an identifiable relationship between extent of decisional participation and the perceived or preferred relative influence of administrative officials?

2. Is any identifiable participation-influence relationship differentially distributed among the general teaching population?

METHODOLOGY

Relevant data for this study was collected through utilization of questionnaire survey techniques. Subjects receiving questionnaires were teachers employed in two school districts located in Western New York State. One research site (referred to below as "I") was a medium sized rural school district and the second site (referred to below as "II") a small-city (population app. 50,000) urban district. Complete usable responses from teachers in each district resulted in return rates of 75% in district "I" and 60% in district "II". An analysis of the demographic characteristics of respondents and non-respondents in each district revealed no significant difference when considering population and survey sample distributions of attributes such as age, sex, marital status and teaching level.

The following characteristics of each subject were taken directly from completed questionnaires: age, sex, marital status, teaching level, employing district, and seniority in employing district. For analysis purposes these demographic characteristics were considered as variables which might serve to modify any participation-influence phenomenon. Use of the characteristics listed below as "variables" for analytical purposes required the computation of specific indices for each subject.

a) Degree of Overall Decisional Participation: This index was derived by simply summing over each subject's "yes" or "no" response to current participation in a series of eleven organizational decisions (listed in Table II).

b) Degree of Expressive Decisional Parcicipation; and

c) Degree of Instrumental Decisional Participation: In a variety of contexts it has been noted that one can distinguish between characteristics of professional roles that concern essential or core (i.e., expressive) activities and supportive or secondary (i.e., instrumental) activities.[5] An independent sample of teachers was asked to sort along an expressive-instrumental continuum the eleven decisional items used in computing the Overall Decisional Participation Index. As a result of these judgemental tasks two additional participation indices were computed for each subject; i.e., responses to participation in decisions concerning expressive or instrumental issues were grouped, for each subject. Items relevant to each decisional category are listed in Table II.

d) Commitment to a School System: It was thought that the extent to which a teacher was commited to his present employing school system might affect any participation-influence relationship. Consequently, an index of "organizational commitment" was constructed for each subject based on summed over responses to whether or not the subject would leave his current school system for employment in another district if offered inducements such as:

a slight increase in pay
a slight increase in status
a position allowing slightly greater creativity
a position in which colleagues were slightly friendlier

e) Perceptions and Preferences of Administrative Influence: As indicated by our basic research questions, for analysis purposes the primary dependent variables were perceptions of and preferences for relative degrees of school principal and superintendent influence.

In order to determine the relative influence of administrative officials subjects were asked to rank order a series of role performers, including school principals and superintendents, in terms of (1) their currently perceived influence and (2) the relative influence which was believed should exist. Thus, for each subject we received an indication of perceived current influence for principals and superintendents as well as levels of preferred relative influence for these same administrative officials.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Reported in Table I are the results of correlational analyses of overall relationships between degree of decisional participation and administrative influence, and participation-influence relationships when accounting for the possible effects of variables such as sex, age, marital status, school district, teaching level, seniority and degree of organizational commitment.

1. In general, there existed a negative relationship between the extent of decisional participation by teachers and the degree of perceived and, in particular, preferred administrative influence. That is to say, with the exception noted below, the greater the number of decisions in which all teachers participated the lower the perceived or preferred relative influence of school principals and superintendents. There did not appear to be any relationship between either overall or expressive decisional participation and the perceived current influence of school principals.

2. While in general, increased participation was found to be related to perceptions of reduced influence for school superintendents,

TABLE I

Correlates of Present Participation in Decision Making[1]

	Current Influence		Preferred Influence	
	Principal	Superintendent	Principal	Superintendent
A. All Teachers (N=454)				
(1) All Issues	-	.16*	.22*	.18*
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.16*	.20*	.16*
(3) Instrumental Issues	.11	.13*	.21*	.17*
B. Teaching Level				
Secondary Teachers (N=159)				
(1) All Issues				
(2) Expressive Issues		none		none
(3) Instrumental Issues				
Elementary Teachers (N=295)				
(1) All Issues	.13	.23*	.22*	.23*
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.19*	.19*	.21*
(3) Instrumental Issues	.15*	.21*	.22*	.21*
C. Sex				
Males (N=126)				
(1) All Issues	-	-	-	-
(2) Expressive Issues	-	-	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	.19	-	.19	.21
Females (N=315)				
(1) All Issues	-	.22*	.12	.14
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.22*	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	.16*	.12	.15
D. Marital Status				
Single (N=119)				
(1) All Issues				
(2) Expressive Issues		none		none
(3) Instrumental Issues				

[1] Due to directional characteristics of the measurement instruments, a positive correlation indicates that the greater a teacher's participation in a specified area of organizational decision-making the lower the degree of principal or superintendent influence he currently recognizes or would prefer.

Only correlations significant beyond the .05 level appear in Table I. Correlation coefficients with an asterisk (*) are significant beyond the .01 level.

TABLE I (cont'd)

Correlates of Present Participation in Decision Making

	Current Influence		Preferred Influence	
	Principal	Superintendent	Principal	Superintendent
G. Years in School System				
One to three (N=156)				
(1) All Issues	-	.24*	-	-
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.21*	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	.22*	-	-
Four to ten (N=167)				
(1) All Issues	.23*	.16	.33*	.29*
(2) Expressive Issues	.18	.21*	.29*	.23*
(3) Instrumental Issues	.21*	-	.26*	.26*
Eleven and up (N=103)				
(1) All Issues				
(2) Expressive Issues		none		none
(3) Instrumental Issues				
H. Commitment to the School District Low (N=86)				
(1) All Issues				
(2) Expressive Issues		none		none
(3) Instrumental Issues				
Medium (N=130)				
(1) All Issues	-	.19	.25*	.24*
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.18	.20	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	-	.24*	.28*
High (N=214)				
(1) All Issues	-	.17	-	-
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.16	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	.14	.15	.14

TABLE I (cont'd)

Correlates of Present Participation in Decision Making

	Current Influence		Preferred Influence	
	Principal	Superintendent	Principal	Superintendent
D. Marital Status (cont'd)				
Married (N=294)				
(1) All Issues	-	.20*	.20*	.14
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.18*	.13	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	.11	.17*	.22*	.18*
E. Age				
Twenty-one to twenty-nine (N=152)				
(1) All Issues	-	.21*	-	-
(2) Expressive Issues	-	.21*	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	.20*	-	-
Thirty to forty-five (N=151)				
(1) All Issues	-	-	18	21*
(2) Expressive Issues	-	-	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	-	17	23*
Forty-six and up (N=118)				
(1) All Issues	-	.19	.23	-
(2) Expressive Issues	-	-	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	.19	.30*	.20
F. School District				
"I" (N-204)				
(1) All Issues	-	-	-	-
(2) Expressive Issues	-	-	-	-
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	.14	.15	-
"II" (N=250)				
(1) All Issues	.14	.20*	.19*	.24*
(2) Expressive Issues	.13	.19*	.17*	.18*
(3) Instrumental Issues	-	.17*	.19*	.24*

TABLE II

EXPRESSIVE AND INSTRUMENTAL DECISION DISTINCTIONS

A. Decisions Concerning Expressive Issues

1. Hiring new faculty members.
2. Selecting specific instructional texts.
3. Resolving learning problems of individual students.
4. Determining appropriate instructional methods and techniques.
5. Establishing general instructional policies.

B. Decisions Concerning Instrumental Issues

1. Planning school budgets.
2. Determining specific faculty assignments.
3. Resolving faculty member grievances.
4. Planning new buildings and facilities.
5. Resolving problems with community groups.
6. Determining faculty salaries.

the strongest consistent relationships concerned the preferred or desired influence of administrative officials. In other words, current decisional participation was most consistently related to preferences for lower levels of principal and superintendent influence; the more teachers actually participated in school systems decision-making the less influential they believed principals and superintendents should be.

3. There existed little or no discernible relationship between degree of decisional participation and perceptions of or preferences for administrative influence among secondary school teachers; males (with the exception of participation in instrumental issues); those employed by a school system from one to three and eleven or more years; and teachers characterized by low organizational commitment.

4. The most consistent negative participation-influence relationships were found among elementary level teachers; females; married personnel; teachers employed in school district "II", individuals with four to ten years seniority; and teachers exhibiting medium levels of organizational commitment.

5. Participation in decisions of an instrumental nature tended to be associated with perceptions and preferences for reduced administrative influence, even when there did not appear to exist any relationship between level of overall participation and degree of administrator influence.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Contrary to the implications of research by Tannenbaum and others, a "fixed pie" notion of influence apparently does exist among teaching personnel, particularly when considering teacher conceptions of optimal levels of administrative influence. As teachers increase their levels of actual participation in decision-making processes they apparently prefer to see reductions in the relative organizational influence of principals ans superintendents. Moreover, increases in current decisional participation are also associated with reductions in the perceived influence of school district superintendents, but unrelated to the perceived influence of building principals. If, as has been suggested, one goal of current teacher collective bargaining activities is increased participation in school system decision-making,[6] the resistence of school superintendents to these actions may be based on a recognition that such decisional participation would be interpreted by teachers as a reduction in the relative influence of administrative officials.

In addition, this research indicates that increased decisional participation on issues of a supportive or instrumental nature is likely to be associated with perceptions of and preferences for decreased levels of administrative influence. Since most negotiating activity at least initially focuses on issues of an instrumental nature, administrative reluctance to engage in such behavior is certainly understandable and, to some extent, justified.

On the other hand, since it has been previously shown that increased decisional participation is related to increased job satisfaction among teaching personnel,[7] this research indicates that school administrators (particularly building principals) can be supportive of increased participation for teachers (a) in secondary schools, (b) who are males, (c) are unmarried and (d) either newly employed or "highly senior" in a school system. For such employees increased decisional participation may very well result in increased job satisfaction and no subsequent perception of or desire for reduced levels of administrative influence.

Interestingly, females teaching at the elementary school levels and possessing four to ten years seniority appear to maintain a definite "fixed pie" notion of organizational influence. Teachers with such characteristics have also been shown to be least supportive of collective bargaining activities in school systems.[8] Both findings may be a reflection of differing authority structures at the elementary and secondary school levels. It is possible that in elementary schools the traditional autocratic superior(principal)-subordinate(teacher), sometimes more appropriately designated as superior (male)-subordinate (female), structure breeds a "fixed pie" notion of power, while the more diffuse or complex authority structure found at secondary levels, where it is often superior (male)-subordinate (male), generates a more sophisticated concept of decisional influence.

Finally, and related to the above, this research suggests that relationships between decisional participation and administrative influence may vary directly with the maturity of decision-making

relationships characterizing school systems. Clearly, while a consistent negative participation-influence relationship existed in district "II" almost no relationship was discovered among teaching personnel in district "I". After spending extensive research time in interview and observational activities it has become clear that one major distinguishing characteristic for these districts is the extent to which administrative and teaching personnel experience mutual trust and respect. In district "II" decisional structures had been greatly affected by recent collective negotiation activities. Contract and grievance settlement efforts had resulted in the reallocation of decisional authority under rather emotional circumstances. While district "I" had also recently experienced contract and grievance settlement activities there existed little evidence of any high degree of emotionalism or distrust. The idea that the sharing of authority does not result in reduced administrative influence may require the absence of emotionalism and the existence of trusting supportive relationships among both administrators and teachers; a condition currently often not found in tense, anxiety and conflict ridden urban school systems such as district "II".

FOOTNOTES

1. J. March and H. Simon, Organizations, New York: Wiley, 1958.

2. D. Katz and R. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations, New York: Wiley, 1966.

3. P. Blau and W. Scott, Formal Organizations, San Francisco: Chandler, 1962.

4. See for example A. Tannenbaum (ed.) Control In Organizations, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.

5. J. Alutto, "Men, Motivation and Productivity", Administrative Management Society Bulletin, Vol. 10, No. 2, August, 1969, pp. 1-8.

6. J. Belasco, J. Alutto and F. Greene, "A Case Analysis of Negotiation Behavior in an Urban School System", Education and Urban Society, Vol. II, No. 1, November, 1969, pp. 22-39.

7. H. Hornstein, et.al., "Influence and Satisfaction in Organizations: A Replication", Sociology of Education, Fall, 1968, pp. 380-389.

8. J. Belasco and J. Alutto, "Organizational Impacts of Teacher Negotiations", Industrial Relations, Vol. 9, No. 1, October, 1969, pp. 67-79.